United for Libraries

Association of Library Trustees,
Advocates, Friends and Foundations

A division of the American Library Association

A Library Board's

Practical Guide

To Board Self Evaluation

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INTRODUCTION

Trustees and Library Commissioners make important fiscal and administrative decisions critical to the functioning of their library. Board members commit their time and skills for effective governing. It is important that they understand their roles and responsibilities and possess the information necessary to make wise decisions as a Board.

Library environments are in continuous flux and Board composition changes as terms expire and new members arrive. It is not always possible for all members to possess the competencies needed to operate as a team in addressing the needs and concerns of the library, particularly when Trustees arrive on the Board with varied experience.

An annual self-evaluation tool can assist Trustees to assess the competencies essential to their performance as Board members. Further, it will assist them in seeking opportunities for training and continuing education and adjust individual perception of operation and gaps in information.

By carefully considering the assessment questions in this guide, the Board should see the following outcomes:

- Boards will gain an understanding on specifically what strengths and weaknesses are present.
- Boards will operate as a team in addressing their needs and concerns.

COMPETENCIES

Competencies are considered to be those skills that provide Trustees with the potential for successfully performing their roles. They are useful in motivating us to elevate our performance and realize results relevant to a Board's direction and vision.

When applied, competencies possess the potential and the means for setting more effective criteria for developing and evaluating performance. They also identify the gap between our current skills and what we need to acquire in order to become more effective. Following are the competencies that are considered to be most critical:

- General knowledge.
- Board operation.
- Fundraising.
- Advocacy.
- Lobbying.
- Decision making.
- Strategic planning.
- Policy making.
- Finance.
- Professional development.

By accepting these particular competencies as essential to performance, individual Trustees can determine how they measure up and work to build on areas of weakness to develop a more efficient role on their Board and improve its functioning. Before using this guide, it is essential that all Board members agree that these are, indeed, competencies that Trustees should possess. Boards of Trustees might also consider adding additional areas that are important to them.

This guide is designed to help evaluate individual Trustees competencies and to determine the effectiveness of your Board as a whole. Your honesty in assessing your competencies will determine how helpful the instrument will assist you in your particular situation. There are no correct answers, only relevant ones for making a self-assessment and moving on to improvement.

How to Use this Guide

Each area of competency is reviewed in detail in the following sections. Included are the areas of evaluation for each competency. At the end of this guide you will find these formatted for distribution to your Board. You may choose to have Board members complete the entire evaluation at one time, or you may distribute individual sections.

The evaluation is set-up for yes/no evaluation. You may also consider asking Board members to rank each area on a scale of 1 to 5 for a more detailed analysis. Consider also completing the full evaluation now to assess the Board and then have Board members again complete one or more sections after addressing any concerns raised from the initial assessment. See "Completing the Self-Evaluation Process" for more details on next steps.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

Understanding the role of the Trustees versus the role of library management is critical to effective relationships and will ensure that Trustees do not slip into the micromanagement of the library. Understanding the role of the library director will further serve to ensure that the Director can be evaluated effectively by the Board.

To be truly effective, Board members must also understand the role of the library itself – Trustees should know well the library's mission and how the library's policies, services, and programs work to ensure that the mission is met. Trustees should be well versed on the various issues that impact their library and its services, including issues on the state and national levels such as trends in intellectual freedom, privacy rights, and funding for libraries.

Libraries rarely operate completely independently from a larger organizational environment. Often libraries are city or town departments, sometimes they are agencies within the city or town governance. Whether Trustees are appointed by a municipal governing body or elected by the public at large, all Trustees will be accountable to someone. Board members should understand their position within the structure of the community. Even if a library is entirely separate from any official government body, the Board should understand that they are always and ultimately accountable to the community they serve.

Areas of Evaluation

The following questions are designed to elicit whether and how well Trustees know how the library fits into the larger community vision. They should know about the library's mission and why their library is important. They should know about the various issues that affect the library and its services. This knowledge is fundamental for Trustees to succeed in their roles. If there is a low level of this basic knowledge, then this is a good area to put at the head of the list for Board improvement.

- ☐ Board members understand their roles and responsibilities.
- ☐ Board members understand the role and responsibilities of the library director.
- ☐ Board members can identify the mission statement, objectives and vision of the library.
- ☐ Board members are familiar with all local, state, and federal laws having effect on libraries.
- ☐ Board members are familiar with library issues at the local, state and federal levels.
- ☐ Board members understand the structure and bylaws of the Board.
- ☐ Board members are familiar with current library policies.
- ☐ Board members are familiar with the history and role of the Friends of the Library.
- ☐ Board members are familiar with the history and role of the Foundation.
- ☐ Board members know to which agency (agencies) the Board reports.

BOARD OPERATION

While it might not seem glamorous, the truth is that the majority of time a Trustee spends in service to the library will be at the monthly Board meeting. It is important therefore, that these meetings are structured in a way that ensures they are productive and allow for the intellectual input of all Board members in determining how well the library is meeting its obligations to the citizens it serves. It is important as well that Board members are required to attend a minimum number of meetings in order to retain their seats as Board members. The Board should have an explicit policy dictating the number of unexcused and excused absences that will be accepted.

The Board president who presides over the meeting (or the vice-president in the absence of the president) should be well acquainted with meeting rules. How many Trustees must be present to constitute a quorum? How will a decision be made – by a majority or by consensus? When will a Trustee be considered out of order? How can everyone be brought into critical discussions? There are many books available that can help guide you, perhaps the most widely accepted of which is *Roberts Rules of Order.*

It is also very important for all Trustees to understand their role as the *governing body* versus the library director's role as *manager.* Regular meetings of the Board are the most important opportunities the Trustees have to interact with the library director. The Board should carefully avoid micromanaging the Director in meetings. The library director is ultimately going to be evaluated on outcomes in various goal areas. Therefore, it is important that the Director have the leeway needed to manage the process for arriving at successful outcomes. This means that the Director manages staff, collection, services, programs, and all issues associated with general, day-to-day operations. Nothing will damage good working (functional) relationships more than Trustees who are not clear on where the line is drawn; and damaged relationships will ultimately negatively affect the library and the quality of its services.

<u>Areas of Evaluation</u>

The questions below will help Trustees assess their ability to hold effective meetings that foster interaction and help to move the library forward.

- ☐ The library director provides the Board with accurate and up-to-date information in order to make sound and effective decisions at least one week in advance of meetings.
- ☐ Board members are given an opportunity to express views without prejudice.
- ☐ The Board Chair sets a clear agenda and circulates it to Trustees prior to each meeting.
- ☐ The Board Chair identifies goals for the meetings and summarizes progress on business at the end.
- ☐ The rules of *Robert's Rules of Order* or similar official parliamentary guide are followed.
- ☐ Board members regularly attend meetings and assigned committee meetings.
- ☐ A Friends of the Library liaison in invited to report on Friends' activities and efforts at each Board meeting.
- ☐ Draft minutes of each Board or committee meeting are available shortly after the meeting.

FUNDRAISING

One of the most important roles for Trustees is to ensure that the library has the resources it needs to meet its mission. This means that the Trustees must hire and then support an excellent library director. The Trustees must work to ensure that the library has a strong and adequate budget to support excellent public services (see "Lobbying" and "Advocacy" later). The Trustees should ensure that fundraising opportunities are identified and maximized to lend additional support to the library's operating budget.

In today's competitive environment where there are ever increasing demands on the public dollar and where the anti-tax sentiment seems as strong as ever, many Trustees are finding that in order to take their libraries from good to excellent, additional money must be brought in through various fundraising efforts. In addition, capital campaigns for new or expanded library buildings often require some private funding even if the municipality within which the library resides is supportive.

Because Trustees are ultimately accountable for the quality of service their library provides, they must necessarily have a broad view on fundraising. This begins with understanding the economic environment within which the library operates. It also means that they are aware of the various opportunities that exist for bringing in additional resources. The Trustees, working with the library director, can set goals for fundraising and, importantly, assist in the attainment of those goals.

Fundraising can involve setting up a library foundation to work on large gift donations and endowment giving. It involves the support of the grassroots fundraising that the Friends of the Library engage in. It involves, as well, personal giving to either the foundation or the Friends group to the degree that each Trustee is capable.

Areas of Evaluation

The following questions will help the Board determine their competency in fundraising. This level of competency, in turn, can guide the Trustees in bringing their commitment in this area to a higher level.

- ☐ The Board assists in setting fundraising goals and is actively involved in fundraising.
- ☐ The Board works with the Friends of the Library and Foundation to initiate fundraising campaigns with the cooperation of the library director.
- ☐ The Board is aware of funding needs of the Library.
- ☐ Board members make connections with the corporate community and communicate these connections to the Board.
- ☐ Board members liaise with the Friends of the Library.
- ☐ If a Friends group does not exist, the Board provides assistance in establishing such a group and in maintaining a supportive relationship.

ADVOCACY

For the purposes of this guide, advocacy refers to the ongoing effort to raise the profile of the library. There are many ways to ensure that the value of the public library is visible to the community it serves on a regular basis. It involves making connections with the "power brokers" in the community, including local politicians and the press. It also involves word of mouth promotion of the library and engagement with other civic organizations.

More than public awareness, however, advocacy takes a strong point of view and is undertaken with the understanding that it should have the ability to affect predisposed community decision makers in favor of supporting the library. This means that Trustees should be aware of the local political climate. Not just with regard to the library, but with all the issues facing community members. Because funding for libraries comes from finite resources, the library must compete against other agencies for a fair piece of the pie.

No one has a stronger and more well-informed voice than the library's Trustees. They have the benefit of understanding exactly what the library provides to the community and what it takes to provide services. In addition, unlike staff, the Trustees have nothing to gain personally from strong financial support.

If it is important for Trustees to be involved with fundraising, it could be argued that it is even more important that Trustees take a lead in advocating for their libraries. Money brought in from fundraising does a lot of good for the library, there's no doubt about that. But, in the end, libraries that *depend* on fundraising are depending on soft money. Libraries are much more stable in both the short and long term if those who fund them clearly understand their value. Trustees have a critical role in making sure this happens.

Areas of Evaluation

Below are questions designed to help the Board determine whether they are doing all they can to put the library on the radar screen in a politically powerful way. The questions show that being an effective advocate isn't hard . . . it just needs to be done and done throughout the year.

- ☐ Board members are cognizant of the political process and the manner in which the Board can impact decision making.
- ☐ Board members accept and respect that the chair is the lead spokesperson for the Board.
- ☐ The library director works with the Board to develop a strong message and talking points.
- ☐ The Board liaises with the press on a regular basis.
- ☐ The Board pursues advocacy initiatives year round – before, during, and after elections.
- ☐ The Board works in partnership with the Friends of the Library and library patrons encouraging them to voice their support on behalf of the library.

LOBBYING

A Board of Trustees that does an effective year round job of advocacy will be a Board that has a much better chance of success when lobbying decision makers for adequate library funding. Lobbying takes advocacy a step further and is targeted at the library budget, a referendum or bond issue, or another issue or issues that will directly impact the library.

Not only is the issue (budget, bond issue, etc.) targeted in a lobbying campaign, so are the people who can make or break the library's goal. This means the Trustees must know who their decision makers are and know them personally. During advocacy efforts throughout the year, the Trustees should be getting to know the local political leaders, members of the press, and others in the community who wield power and have strong voices.

When lobbying for the library, Trustees must meet directly with decision makers. They must make their case for the library and be firm about how much the library contributes to the community. They should share their knowledge about the various and diverse services the library offers, how those services change lives on a daily basis, and what it costs to deliver those services.

If the Board has developed a good relationship with the press, one that is mutually respectful, then they will be in a good position to encourage the media to take a stand on behalf of the library or, failing that, convince the press to publish an op-ed piece that extols the library's value and cost-effectiveness.

As with an ongoing advocacy campaign, the Trustees have a lot of power in their voices when lobbying for the library. Usually they are voted into office by the same constituency as the decision makers or they have been appointed by those decision makers to service on the library's Board. Given this, Trustees should feel both empowered and obligated to be effective lobbyists for their library.

Areas of Evaluation

How does your Board measure up in this regard? The following questions will help you decide.

- ☐ The Board develops a long-range plan for lobbying on a year-round basis.
- ☐ All Board members take an active part in lobbying.
- ☐ Board members are given the necessary information to contact elected officials during the year and keep such officials or other informal contacts informed on library issues through visitations, e-mails, and phone calls.
- ☐ Board members make visits to community groups for the purpose of articulating the Library's role and contribution to the community.
- ☐ The Board actively lobbies decision makers and/or the community at large for support of the budget each year.

DECISION MAKING

No library can move ahead unless the Board is able to make good solid decisions that are based on the best information available. While the Board is not charged with making decisions about the day to day operations of the library, Trustees are responsible for setting goals and developing policies that will help the library achieve those goals in the most effective manner possible.

An ineffective Board is one that either has little context for various library policies or one that is given the information necessary for wise decision making but has Board members who do not educate themselves prior to each meeting on the issues that will be discussed.

Trustees should require that the library director provides a Board packet at least a week prior to each meeting. This packet should include the library's budget, information on library usage, a summary of programs and services being offered – especially those that are new and/or forthcoming – and the packet should include information on local, state, or national activities or legislation that might impact the library.

Areas of Evaluation

How well does your Board do in making decisions? The questions below will help you find out.

- ☐ The Board analyzes decisions and examines their impact before making them.
- ☐ Board members consider in detail the options available in making a decision.
- ☐ The Board examines past policies of the Board on an annual basis.
- ☐ The Director provides the Board with sufficient information for making a decision.
- ☐ Board members review the agenda and the supporting information prior to the meeting in order that they can make effective decisions.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Even if the library wanted to maintain the status quo, the environment within which the library operates is constantly changing. That means that in order for the library to effectively deliver services to its community, the Board must ensure that the library's mission and goals are always relevant. Strategic planning, therefore, is an important job for Trustees.

It used to be standard that libraries (and other organizations) looked to engage in the planning process every five years. With the advent of constantly changing technology, rapid changes in community demographics, and the continuous need to educate the public and public officials about the value of the library, planning is usually done more frequently and has become more strategic.

What does strategic planning mean versus long-range planning? The strategic planning process relies less on meeting a strict set of objectives or actions over the course of time and more on ensuring that the library has the tools and flexibility needed to meet unforeseen challenges and/or to take advantage of new opportunities that arise within the context of the greater goals and vision the Board has articulated for the library.

Though planning is serious business, it can nevertheless be the most exciting part of a Trustee's role. It's the time when the Board steps aside from the usual business of library governance and imagines exactly what the perfect library would look like in the community and what goals and resources will be needed to achieve that vision. It's an opportunity to move the library forward.

Working with staff, the Board can and should assess the environment. How is it changing? How might the library adapt to address these changes? Are the policies enabling the library to be flexible in meeting community needs or are they a hindrance? What services are most important, which need to be reworked or rebuilt? These are the types of questions you'll be asking during the process.

Once a new strategic plan has been developed, the staff will be working on a daily basis making decisions that are in keeping with the direction the plan has set. At the same time, the Board must ensure that its decisions are also in keeping with the plan, that the plan continues to be relevant for community services, and that planning is seen as a critical and even ongoing role for the Board.

Areas of Evaluation

The questions below are designed to reflect the Board's understanding of the importance of planning, that everyone is aware of the direction for services that have been set by the process and that the plan is always reviewed and consistently provides the context for the Board's decision making.

- ☐ The Board creates goals and action plans based on the strategic plan.
- ☐ The Board reviews progress of the strategic plan on a regular basis.
- ☐ An orientation package containing the current strategic plan is provided for new Board members.
- ☐ Strategic planning becomes a regular process for the Board.

POLICY MAKING

Policies provide the context within which operational decisions are made by library staff. They are not only guiding principles but guidelines about the library's rules and regulations. Library policies can be critically important to ensure that there is a consistency of practice therefore ensuring an equality of service. Because policies are made objectively, they enable staff members to make good decisions and fair decisions as they provide services to a wide diversity of users.

Typically, the library will have policies to address and guide operations in a wide range of services and operational issues. For example, library policies should address collection development, staff development, computer use, gifts to the library, meeting room usage, unattended children in the library, appropriate library behavior, and other issues that need guidelines.

The library director can and should be a critical resource to the Board in the development of new policies as well as modification of existing policies. He or she will best know what issues are not being effectively addressed by current policies or a lack of policies. The library director also has the advantage of knowing what best practices exist with regard to, for example, collection development. He or she can and should help guide the Board in the development of a policy that is responsive to the community and that respects intellectual freedom. In fact, it is not uncommon for the library director to draft an early version of policies in preparation for Board discussion.

Working with the library director, the Board, or a sub-committee of the Board, should review policies on a regular basis. Even if no changes are recommended, the review of policies is a wonderful opportunity for the Director to share with the Board how the various area each policy addresses is going and to have philosophical discussions about the underlying principles that inform them.

Areas of Evaluation

The questions below will allow your Board to assess how well they know the library's policies and why those policies matter.

- ☐ The Board reviews policies on an annual basis.
- ☐ The Board is familiar with policies.
- ☐ The Board can articulate the underlying principle(s) that a policy is addressing and is able to defend all policies to the public.
- ☐ Board members can distinguish between policy making and operational decision making.

FINANCE

In most libraries, the financial responsibility of the Board is oversight. Day to day decision making regarding the dispensation of the library's resources rightfully belongs with the library director. This does not mean, however, that the Board can abdicate their responsibility to ensure that the budget is being spent appropriately and that the budget is working in support of the library's mission and goals.

The Director will be instrumental in working with the Board to develop the budget. He or she will have the best understanding of which programs and services are underfunded, which services need to be expanded, what programs need to be implemented for the first time, and where the costs of providing services is changing. This is a time for the Board to learn more about how the budget works as an instrument for services and a good time to discuss the service areas the library addresses.

Every year (and in some cases every other year) the Board will be asked to submit their library budget to the those who have final say over that budget whether it is the citizenry directly, a city or county council, or another entity to which the library reports. This is the time for the Board to actively defend their proposal. All too often, the library budget is a target for cuts and it may, in fact, be the most important job of all for the Board to be active and articulate supporters of the budget proposal.

Areas of Evaluation

Use the questions below to determine your Board's ability to responsibly fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities.

- ☐ The Board is provided with full and accurate information regarding the library's finances and budget throughout the year.
- ☐ The Board is given sufficient lead-in time to discuss budget issues and make wise decisions.
- ☐ The Board understands the impact of decisions on the enhancement of services.
- ☐ The Board is prepared and motivated to defend and promote the budget to the decision makers.
- ☐ The information provided reflects back to specific services.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The best Boards around are those that continue to learn and grow in their roles. Luckily there are many ways to do this. The very first step in providing each Trustee with the knowledge he or she needs to be effective begins with Board orientation. It is very important for incoming Board members to understand the library's mission, how the library works to meet that mission and what the Trustees' role is in governing, supporting and promoting the library.

Other steps can be as easy as joining regional and state-wide library associations that have special sections for Trustees. Others can be more challenging such as attending national conferences and even state conferences where programs for Trustees are presented.

No matter your ability to travel to conferences, however, there is no reason to be left in the dark regarding the ever changing world of the public library. By joining national associations you will receive journals that will keep you informed about the issues that are impacting library services. In addition, more and more associations and organizations are using technology to provide their members with remote training via webinars and podcasts. The Board may want to initiate a networking activity with other library trustees in the region. Periodic opportunities to discuss common library issues will be helpful in local decision making.

Finally, all Boards should expect their library director to keep them up to date not only on issues affecting the library's service presently, but issues that are surfacing statewide, nationally, and even globally that will eventually impact your library directly or indirectly.

Areas of Evaluation

The following questions will help you determine whether your Board has access to the resources it needs to be well informed about the issues that can help them perform their duties in the most highly effective way possible.

- ☐ Board members are given opportunities at the local, state, and national level to improve performance.

- ☐ Board members are encouraged by the chair to take on such opportunities.

- ☐ Board members are given an opportunity to report back and share with other Board members information acquired.

- ☐ New members are given a Board orientation on their roles.

- ☐ Board members are members of either local, state and/or national associations (Association of Library Trustees and Advocates, Friends of Libraries U.S.A., the Public Library Association, e.g.).

COMPLETING THE SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS

After completing your responses, compile them by recording a summary. Your summary should give you a fair indication about which competencies rate high and which low, as well as where your strength lies. There are no perfect Boards – but some Boards operate without taking a breath from time to time to assess present opinion for implementing future change. You can now use responses to restructure the Board's direction. You can also directly relate them to the Board's goals as indicated below.

When each member has completed their worksheets, they should be combined together for the Board to examine. It would be expected that many Board members would have similar contents. Then the Board can discuss and reach consensus on each area and goals, both previous ones and new ones. What you have before you is a template for re-evaluating existing Board goals or the establishment of new ones.

Setting Goals for the Future

Following the completion of the Board self-evaluation process, any goals that the Board established at the beginning of the year should be reviewed. In absence of existing goals, the Board should establish them. By undergoing the evaluation process you will be ready to relate your assessment of personal competencies to Board goals and as a Board come to a general agreement in direction. The Board's goals might be listed under several broad headings such as those addressed in this guide:

- Board Knowledge and Decision Making.
- Advocacy and Lobbying.
- Policies.
- Finance.
- Strategic Planning.
- Professional Development.

Once all goals have been established, identify what has been accomplished for each goal. In some cases no goal may have been established, or nothing was accomplished for a given goal. If nothing was accomplished, identify what obstacles were encountered. Challenges to goal accomplishment might be as simple as action steps not identified, or it could be that no one was assigned to an action step. It might be determined the goal was not within the Board's purview or not a high priority. Relate your competencies to that of the Board goals. This will help the Board establish priorities for meeting goals that address Board weaknesses.

Each member should indicate whether each goal is worthy of pursuing as well as listing any new goals that should be included for the next year. For incomplete goals or for new ones, members should identify action steps, timing, and any needed resources. Again, the Board should ensure that the goals adopted are responsive to the self-assessment and should be designed to address overall weakness and buttress the Board's strengths.

CONCLUSION

Excellent libraries have strong Boards that understand their role and the importance of their role. Great Boards work well together, they are well informed and make good decisions. Great Boards ensure that the library has all the resources it needs to deliver quality service. This means that they hire the best director possible and then work to ensure that the Director gets the funding he or she needs. Great Boards understand the critical importance of the library to the community and take steps throughout the year to ensure that this message gets out to the decision makers and to the community at large.

Self-evaluation is an important tool for Boards to come together to determine the areas where they excel and, importantly, to determine the areas where they can improve. By taking steps to be the best Board possible, the library will be assured that its future is bright.

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General Knowledge

The following questions are designed to elicit whether and how well Trustees know how the library fits into the larger community vision. They should know about the library's mission and why their library is important. They should know about the various issues that affect the library and its services. This knowledge is fundamental for Trustees to succeed in their roles. If there is a low level of this basic knowledge, then this is a good area to put at the head of the list for Board improvement. Use the space below each question to comment on your response.

1. Board members understand their roles and responsibilities	❑ YES ❑ NO
2. Board members understand the role and responsibilities of the library director.	❑ YES ❑ NO
3. Board members can identify the mission statement, objectives, and vision of the library	❑ YES ❑ NO
4. Board members are familiar with all local, state, and federal laws having effect on libraries.	❑ YES ❑ NO
5. Board members are familiar with library issues at the local, state and federal levels.	❑ YES ❑ NO

6. Board members understand the structure and bylaws of the Board.	❑ YES ❑ NO
7. Board members are familiar with current library policies.	❑ YES ❑ NO
8. Board members are familiar with the history and role of the Friends of the Library.	❑ YES ❑ NO
9. Board members are familiar with the history and role of the Foundation.	❑ YES ❑ NO
10. Board members know to which agency (or agencies) the Board reports.	❑ YES ❑ NO

Board Operation

The questions below will help Trustees assess their ability to hold effective meetings that foster interaction and help to move the library forward. Use the space below each question to comment on your response.

1. The library director provides the Board with accurate and up-to-date information in order to make sound and effective decisions at least one week in advance of meetings.	❏ YES ❏ NO
2. Board members are given an opportunity to express views without prejudice.	❏ YES ❏ NO
3. The Board Chair sets a clear agenda and circulates it to Trustees prior to each meeting.	❏ YES ❏ NO
4. The Board Chair identifies goals for the meetings and summarizes progress on business at the end.	❏ YES ❏ NO
5. The rules of *Robert's Rules of Order* or similar official parliamentary guide are followed.	❏ YES ❏ NO

6. Board members regularly attend meetings and assigned committee meetings.	❏ YES ❏ NO
7. A Friends of the Library liaison in invited to report on Friends' activities and efforts at each Board meeting.	❏ YES ❏ NO
8. Draft minutes of each Board or committee meeting are available shortly after the meeting.	❏ YES ❏ NO

Fundraising

The following questions will help the Board determine their competency in fundraising. This level of competency, in turn, can guide the Trustees in bringing their commitment in this area to a higher level. Use the space below each question to comment on your response.

1. The Board assists in setting fundraising goals and is actively involved in fundraising	❑ YES ❑ NO
2. The Board works with the Friends of the Library and Foundation to initiate fundraising campaigns with the cooperation of the library director.	❑ YES ❑ NO
3. The Board is aware of funding needs of the Library.	❑ YES ❑ NO
4. Board members make connections with the corporate community and communicate these connections to the Board.	❑ YES ❑ NO
5. Board members liaise with the Friends of the Library.	❑ YES ❑ NO
6. If a Friends group does not exist, the Board provides assistance in establishing such a group and in maintaining a supportive relationship.	❑ YES ❑ NO

Advocacy

Below are questions designed to help the Board determine whether they are doing all they can to put the library on the radar screen in a politically powerful way. The questions show that being an effective advocate isn't hard . . . it just needs to be done and done throughout the year. Use the space below each question to comment on your response.

1. Board members are cognizant of the political process and the manner in which the Board can impact decision making.	❑ YES ❑ NO
2. Board members accept and respect that the chair is the lead spokesperson for the Board.	❑ YES ❑ NO
3. The library director works with the Board to develop a strong message and talking points	❑ YES ❑ NO
4. The Board liaises with the press on a regular basis.	❑ YES ❑ NO
5. The Board pursues advocacy initiatives year round – before, during and after elections.	❑ YES ❑ NO
6. The Board works in partnership with the Friends of the Library and library patrons encouraging them to voice their support on behalf of the library.	❑ YES ❑ NO

Lobbying

How does your Board measure up in this regard? The following questions will help you decide. Use the space below each question to comment on your response.

1. The Board develops a long-range plan for lobbying on a year-round basis.	❑ YES ❑ NO
2. All Board members take an active part in lobbying.	❑ YES ❑ NO
3. Board members are given the necessary information to contact elected officials during the year and keep such officials or other informal contacts informed on library issues through visitations, e-mails, and phone calls.	❑ YES ❑ NO
4. Board members make visits to community groups for the purpose of articulating the Library's role and contribution to the community.	❑ YES ❑ NO
5. The Board actively lobbies decision makers and/or the community at large for support of the budget each year.	❑ YES ❑ NO

Decision Making

How well does your Board do in making decisions? The questions below will help you find out. Use the space below each question to comment on your response.

1. The Board analyzes decisions and examines their impact before making them.	❑ YES ❑ NO
2. Board members consider in detail the options available in making a decision.	❑ YES ❑ NO
3. The Board examines past policies of the Board on an annual basis.	❑ YES ❑ NO
4. The Director provides the Board with sufficient information for making a decision.	❑ YES ❑ NO
5. Board members review the agenda and the supporting information prior to the meeting in order that they can make effective decisions.	❑ YES ❑ NO

Strategic Planning

The questions below are designed to reflect the Board's understanding of the importance of planning, that everyone is aware of the direction for services that have been set by the process and that the plan is always reviewed and consistently provides the context for the Board's decision making. Use the space below each question to comment on your response.

1. The Board creates goals and action plans based on the strategic plan.	❑ YES ❑ NO
2. The Board reviews progress of the strategic plan on a regular basis.	❑ YES ❑ NO
3. An orientation package containing the current strategic plan is provided for new Board members.	❑ YES ❑ NO
4. Strategic planning becomes a regular process for the Board.	❑ YES ❑ NO

Policy Making

The questions below will allow your Board to assess how well they know the library's policies and why those policies matter. Use the space below each question to comment on your response.

1. The Board reviews policies on an annual basis.	❑ YES ❑ NO
2. The Board is familiar with policies.	❑ YES ❑ NO
3. The Board can articulate the underlying principle(s) that a policy is addressing and is able to defend all policies to the public.	❑ YES ❑ NO
4. Board members can distinguish between policy making and operational decision making.	❑ YES ❑ NO

Finance

The questions below will help you determine your Board's ability to responsibly fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities. Use the space below each question to comment on your response.

1. The Board is provided with full and accurate information regarding the library's finances and budget throughout the year.	❏ YES ❏ NO
2. The Board is given sufficient lead-in time to discuss budget issues and make wise decisions.	❏ YES ❏ NO
3. The Board understands the impact of decisions on the enhancement of services.	❏ YES ❏ NO
4. The Board is prepared and motivated to defend and promote the budget to the decision makers.	❏ YES ❏ NO
5. The information provided reflects back to specific services.	❏ YES ❏ NO

Professional Development

The following questions will help you determine whether your Board has access to the resources it needs to be well informed about the issues that can help them perform their duties in the most highly effective way possible. Use the space below each question to comment on your response.

1. Board members are given opportunities at the local, state, and national level to improve performance.	❑ YES ❑ NO
2. Board members are encouraged by the chair to take on such opportunities.	❑ YES ❑ NO
3. Board members are given an opportunity to report back and share with other Board members information acquired.	❑ YES ❑ NO
4. New Board members are given a board orientation on their roles.	❑ YES ❑ NO
5. Board members are members of either local, state and/or national associations (Association of Library Trustees and Advocates, Friends of Libraries U.S.A., the Public Library Association, e.g.).	❑ YES ❑ NO